

GREY-HEADED FLYCATCHER *Culicicapa ceylonensis*

An individual was observed perched on bushes in forest on 12 March 2004 at 07h30 near Nayasahar Reservoir, Silviculture Division, Sippighat, South Andaman (c.11°34'N 92°40'E). We watched it for c.25 minutes in poor weather and light conditions. Despite poor visibility, the prominent ashy grey on the head, throat and breast, and yellowish belly and rump, were diagnostic of this species.

BLUE-FRONTED ROBIN *Cinclidium frontale*

A male was sighted at close range in moist deciduous forest at Chidiyatapu, South Andaman (c.11°30'N 92°42'E) on 3 and 4 December 2003. The long graduated tail (lacking white), deep blue upperparts, deep slaty blue on the belly and whitish tail-coverts were diagnostic.

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M. A. Raja Mamannan, and Lalitha Vijayan, Division of Conservation Ecology, Sálím Ali Centre for Ornithology and Natural History, Anaikatty, Coimbatore, 641 108, India. Email: rajamamannan@yahoo.co.in

Spectacled Finch *Callacanthis burtoni*: another new country record for Bhutan

K. DAVID BISHOP

At 07h30 on the morning of 19 April 2008 at an elevation of c. 3,000 m I was driving a tour party from the Paro Valley in western Bhutan slowly uphill through an extensive stand of mature silver fir, hemlock and rhododendron forest on the road to Chelila at c.4,000 m. We were looking for pheasants along the roadside when my attention was drawn to a finch-like bird foraging on the edge of the bitumen. Initially I was distracted by the presence of several Himalayan Monal *Lophophorus impejanus* nearby but after they dispersed I focused my attention on this distinctive and somewhat familiar passerine. At first I could not place it, but knew I had seen it illustrated. Checking Rasmussen and Anderton (2005) while the bird was still a few metres in front of me, I realised that we were looking at a female Spectacled (or Red-browed) Finch *Callacanthis burtoni*. I and several members of the tour then took a series of images, unfortunately all through the front window of the bus and thus less than ideal (one photograph supplied to the editors).

The bird was a stocky, drab-coloured medium-sized passerine with three immediately noticeable features: a quite striking area of yellow-orange skin surrounding the eye; a heavy yellowish bill; and a pronounced, rather patchy white band across what seemed to be the greater coverts. Other features were the dark crown and cheek, which highlighted the colour of the facial skin; the slightly

grey-brown nuchal collar; dark wings highlighted by white tips to the primaries; finely streaked dusky-brown underparts; and pink legs. The bird continued hopping on the roadside, picking at the ground and seemingly feeding on seeds. We watched it for some 20 minutes.

Spiereburg (2005) in his recent review of the Bhutan avifauna does not mention Spectacled Finch, and this would appear to be the first published record of this species for Bhutan and the most easterly record of this species. Spectacled Finch is endemic to the Indian subcontinent (Rasmussen and Anderton 2005) and ranges from north-west Pakistan, Chitral and Safed Koh (possibly also into extreme eastern Afghanistan) and south-east along the Himalayas marginally to Sikkim where it is known from one record (but see below). In parts of its range it is erratic in occurrence and east of Kumaon, Uttar Pradesh, it is very local (Clement *et al.* 1993, Rasmussen and Anderton 2005), although there appear to be increasing numbers of observations from this region (Manoj Sharma pers. comm.; orientbirdimages.org). In Pakistan Spectacled Finch is local and generally a scarce resident, and undergoes small altitudinal movements, summering from 2,740 m up to the tree-line. In north-west India it is locally frequent in Kashmir and breeds from 2,400 m up to the tree-line and winters from 3,000 m down as low as 800 m (Grimmett *et al.* 1998). In Nepal this species is chiefly a

local and erratic winter visitor with just one summer record (Inskipp and Inskipp 1985). However, recent observations in the Annapurna Conservation Area indicate that Ghorepani in particular is a regular wintering area for small numbers, with a maximum count of 11 during February 2001 (Basnet 2002), and there is evidence it may also breed there (Rossetti 1978, Inskipp and Inskipp 2003, Martin Naylor pers. comm.).

In addition there have been several recent records within the extreme east of the species's known winter range. On 31 December 2007 four males and four females were observed in conifers c. 8 km from Lava on the Alghara–Lava road (J. W. den Besten Orientalbirding message 9691); a flock of c.20 was photographed at the Darjeeling Botanical Gardens on 12 February 2008 (Manjula Mathur pers. comm. to Sumit Sen, 22 February 2008), and on 21 March 2008 a male was photographed near Yuksam, West Sikkim (Dipankar Ghose pers. comm.). The latter is the only record for Sikkim since that of Stevens (1925). Clement *et al.* (1993) state that movements of this species are poorly known or understood and probably only of short distance or altitudinal range. Observations presented here show that this species occurs more regularly and further to the east in winter than was earlier thought. Why it moves so far east in winter is unclear. Some observers have suggested that this is in response to exceptionally heavy snow conditions, especially in the north-west of the subcontinent, or possibly to food scarcity in its 'normal' winter range or to food abundance in the form of bumper crops of conifer seeds. Probably it is a combination of these factors and that it has been overlooked owing to the lack of observers at higher elevations during winter.

K. David Bishop, P. O. Box 1234, Armidale, NSW 2350, Australia. kdbishop@ozemail.com.au

Common Ringed Plover *Charadrius hiaticula* and Black-headed Bunting *Emberiza melanocephala*: new records for Vietnam

JOHN D. PILGRIM, PETER BIJLMAKERS, ANDREW CRUTCHLEY, GEMMA CRUTCHLEY, TOON DE BRUYN and ANDREW W. TORDOFF

As explained elsewhere (Pilgrim *et al.* 2009), no formal records have been kept of the distribution and status of bird species in Vietnam, and the status or distribution of a number of species, particularly migratory ones, is unclear. In the last few years, a small number of resident expatriate birdwatchers have focused considerable attention on migratory birds, particularly in northern Vietnam. This has resulted in a better understanding of the status of a number of species (Pilgrim *et al.* 2009), including records of three species not previously reported for the country. One of these will be discussed elsewhere (Bijlmakers and Köhler in prep.) and two are detailed below.

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COMMON RINGED PLOVER *Charadrius hiaticula*
On the morning of 21 February 2007, a Common Ringed Plover was seen near the mouth of the Red River, just north of Xuan Thuy National Park in Nam Dinh Province (c. 20°29'N 106°55'E). The bird was flushed towards AC, JDP and GC by a farmer from a muddy field that had been flooded in preparation for planting rice. The observers had been watching the field for a few minutes previously, and had noted snipe *Gallinago* sp., Spotted Redshank *Tringa erythropus*, Common Greenshank *T. nebularia*, Wood Sandpiper *T. glareola* and Kentish Plover *Charadrius alexandrinus*. When most of these birds flew from the field, a small plover flew towards the observers,